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ABSTRACT

This study explored how community socioeconomic class, setting (rural, small-town, suburban, or urban), and culture influence effective school linkages for preschool children with disabilities. The study utilized a model of school success based on effective schools research. The study analyzed data previously reported for four school districts in a midwestern state and an additional site. School districts represented a suburban affluent setting and four economically disadvantaged settings (urban, small town, rural, and a Native American Indian reservation). The investigator observed all classes serving preschool children with disabilities that included in-depth observation of one 3-year-old child per classroom. Analysis indicated that effective school linkages differed among the five communities with some linkages similar and others distinctly different between low and high socioeconomic level communities and between urban/suburban and rural/small-town communities. Some differences followed a continuum from affluent to urban poverty, to small town, to rural, and to Native American communities. Findings were interpreted to suggest that the low socioeconomic level in some communities raised barriers to principal actions typically found in effective schools and that a rural or small town setting further impeded effective strategies. Minimal involvement of principals and low or ambiguous expectations for student achievement characterized poorer and rural schools. (Contains 33 references.) (DB)

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Exploring the influence of community socioeconomic class, location, and culture on effective school linkages for preschool students with disabilities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how community socioeconomic class; rural, small-town, suburban, or urban setting; and culture influence effective school linkages for preschool children with disabilities. Grounded in a model of school success based on the effective schools research, the findings suggest that the outcomes of a state policy effort intended to meet the needs of young children with disabilities in all school districts were quite different among the five communities studied. Community characteristics complicated the effective schools linkages leading to student learning.

Exploring the influence of community socioeconomic class, location, and culture on effective school linkages for preschool students with disabilities

The education community is reaching a general consensus that early intervention is one appropriate strategy for surmounting obstacles to student achievement (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988; Ford Foundation, 1989; Kagan, 1989; National Governors Association, 1986). Two separate early childhood education (ECE) agendas have emanated from the policy and service delivery system of special and general education. Part H of Public Law (P.L.) 99-457, The Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1986, provides financial incentives for public schools to educate all children ages 3-5 with disabilities by Fall, 1991 (Gallagher, Trohanis, & Clifford, 1989). Strong disincentives include loss of preschool incentive and discretionary grants, and loss of funding for children ages 3-5 under part B of P.L. 94-142. Concomitantly, general educators are requesting national policy initiatives for comprehensive ECE for all children, with a focus on economically disadvantaged preschoolers who are considered at risk for educational failure (Coley & Goertz, 1987; Committee for Economic Development, 1987; Schweinhart, 1985; Slavin & Maddin, 1989).

A review of early childhood initiatives promulgated by the general education community (Bredekamp, 1987; Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988; Ford Foundation, 1989; Grubb, 1989;

Karweit, 1989; Mitchell, 1988; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988; National Governor's Association, 1986, 1987, 1989; Schweinhart, 1985; Warger, 1988; Zigler, 1988) suggests that the public school system should be actively involved in the ECE effort. While it is suggested the schools be the primary location for ECE services, the role of school administrators in ECE has not been addressed. In addition, research and practice in educational administration have traditionally focused on the traditional K-12 program and have neglected both ECE and education for students with special learning needs (Capper, 1992).

McCartney and Jordan (1990) outlined the parallels between research on child care and research on school effects, and described three phases of this related research. They contended that the third phase focuses on "what matters for which types of children" (p. 25) and considers the context and complexity of the educational setting. Similarly, scholars have acknowledged that contextual considerations in the field of educational administration have been neglected (Foster, 1986; Yeakey, 1989). Although some researchers have noted the significance of school and community context in the effective schools research (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986; Wimpelberg, Teddlie, & Stringfield, 1989), others have concurred that the effective schools context should consider school effects on the diversity of ages and

abilities of children within schools, including those identified as disabled (Ferguson, 1987).

To begin to address the research gap in educational policy and administration concerning the community context and as it relates to the learning of students with differing abilities and ages, a previous study reported on early childhood education and the knowledge base of educational administration (Capper, 1992). In that analysis, I examined the current status of early childhood education in four school districts, the role of school administrators in these programs, the extent to which the programs were coordinated with other early childhood efforts in the school, district, and community, and the implications of these data for administrator preparation. In that study, I found that early childhood education for preschool students with disabilities differed dramatically among the districts studied. Students in the suburban, affluent school district attended school twice the amount of time as did students in the low socioeconomic class districts, and

> . . . spen[t] nearly every minute of their day involved in activities aimed for intentional learning. The suburban affluent child[ren] learn[ed] independence and interdependence, in functional, coordinated activities with clear goals aimed for future educational and societal environments (p. 63).

In all the districts, the principal's involvement in the program was minimal and coordination of services was limited.

The purpose of the analysis reported in this paper was to explore further the relationship between community context, policy, and student learning. In this paper, I report the results of a secondary analysis of the data reported in Capper (1992), and examine the extent to which, and in what ways community characteristics of socioeconomic class; rural, small-town, suburban, or urban location; and culture shaped the educational experience of preschool students with disabilities, given the fact that all districts were charged with implementing mandated educational policy for these children.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework which guided the analysis of these data was grounded in Rosenholtz's (1985) structural functional model of school success which characterizes the relationships between the principal, teacher, and learner identified in the effective schools research. Rosenholtz posited that the degree of principal certainty concerning the possibilities of student achievement and the abilities of teachers to "make a difference" determined school goals and guided principal action in recruiting, supporting engaged time, monitoring teacher activity, and providing assistance. These leader actions promoted socialization of school expectations for teachers and students and shaped the amount of teacher collaboration and decision-

making which occur. In turn, teacher interaction influenced the degree of teacher certainty that pedagogical skills can effect student change, and thus increase the likelihood of student success. Finally, student success was a powerful motivator, and supported and sustained teacher contributions to the learning process (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Using this framework, I explored how the community characteristics of socioeconomic class; rural, small-town, suburban, or urban location; and culture shaped or interacted with principal's expectations for student achievement, educational goals, recruitment and retention, supervision, and teacher collaboration in early childhood education programs for preschool students with disabilities.

METHODOLOGY

Capper (1992) reported the details of the methodology used to gather the data for both analyses. In brief, five school districts were selected from a midwestern state. (This secondary analysis includes one research site in addition to the four discussed by Capper, 1992). The school districts represented a suburban affluent setting and four economically disadvantaged settings: urban, small town, rural, and a Native American Indian reservation. Lakeview (suburban, affluent), and Dover (urban,

poverty) were the urban sites. Prairieville (small town), Green Hills (rural), and Deerfield (Native American) were identified as the rural sites (see Table 1 for community characteristics).

Insert Table 1 about here

Each of the districts served preschool children with disabilities in a single classroom, and I observed in those classrooms. In addition, within each classroom one three-year-old (3.0-3.5) child with disabilities was selected by purposive sampling. Thus, in addition to whole class data, more specific data were collected on a target student to facilitate comparisons across districts. The criteria for target student selection were based on SES and learning need. In the economically disadvantaged districts, the child was from a low socioeconomic class family, and in the affluent district, the child was from an affluent family. The children also were the lowest functioning students currently attending the preschool program--based on evaluation data in the students' file. This level of student functioning was targeted for two reasons. First, research has shown that all schools, particularly those in rural and low income districts, have great difficulty providing a meaningful school experience for these students (Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services, 1989). Second, because of advances in medical technology, more and more babies with complex medical

needs are surviving, and their incidence is widely expected to be on the rise in public schools (see Table 2 for child characteristics).

Insert Table 2 about here

Procedures

To address the research questions for the analysis reported in Capper (1992), data collection procedures included interviews, student observations, and document gathering. The districts were visited five times over the course of one semester during the 1988-89 school year. Students were observed throughout five school days over the course of a semester using continuous observation of activities with the Student Observation Instrument (SOI). Teacher lesson plans, student records, and classroom record keeping such as schedules and student goals supplemented the observations. Each child's family, teacher, aide, and therapists were formally and informally interviewed for further corroborative data. Formal interviews were conducted with community persons and community early childhood education providers--one each purposively selected in the categories of day care providers, Head Start directors, coordinators for early intervention, community pastors, community agency directors (e.g., health and human services), government officials (mayor or town chairperson), and a prominent business owner or chief

executive officer. Formal interviews were also conducted with school personnel, including the principal, superintendent, school board members, special education administrators and supervisors, program support teachers, the classroom teacher, and the teacher aide. General education teachers in related programs (e.g., prekindergarten, kindergarten, first grade, Chapter I) were informally interviewed. Community documents such as newspapers, tourist information, and phone books were also collected. Specific demographic information was obtained through the local library in each community.

Analysis

For the secondary analysis, I examined the data within each community, and specifically focused on principal's expectations for student achievement; educational goals established for the students; recruitment, retention, and supervision of the early childhood teachers; and teacher collaboration. Because of space limitations, rather than rely predominantly on direct quotes in specific interviews, I summarized the findings across the sites. I then considered how community characteristics such as socioeconomic class, the population sparsity and density of the community (from rural to small-town to suburban to urban), and the culture of the communities (large population of persons of color in the urban district, and the culture of the Native American district) could shape principal expectations; student goals; recruitment, retention, and supervision of teachers; and

teacher collaboration. I then compared my findings to other related research on the social context of school administration, particularly the seminal work by Rosenholtz (1985), Hallinger and Murphy (1986), Stringfield and Teddlie (1990), and Oakes (1989). Hallinger and Murphy systematically examined the social context of effective schools by focusing on effective schools in low and high SES communities. Stringfield and Teddlie also empirically compared effective schools in rural and urban communities. Oakes developed a model that identified school-level context indicators, and established access to knowledge, press for achievement, and professional teaching conditions as enabling conditions for effective schooling. She further contended that school resources, policy and structure, and school culture enable or constrain in interactive ways the school context indicators (see Capper, in press). The findings were compared to this body of work because these authors have provided both original data and theoretical insights which comprehensively capture the research related to the social and organizational context of schools and school effects.

The discussion presented in this exploratory study is necessarily speculative. Thus, each section concludes with questions which deserve further consideration. Nonetheless, by examining more closely why ECE for students with disabilities differs among varying communities, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners can begin to consider and further explore how the

individual community context shapes educational policy efforts. In each section, I first explain how the effective school linkages differed among communities, and then explore possible reasons for these differences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Expectations for Achievement

The principals in each of the communities were not involved in ECE services; thus, it was difficult to determine their expectations for these students' achievement, much less whether they believed that teachers in the programs could make a difference. Teacher perceptions of principal expectations, however, did not differ among the communities. The ECE teachers in all five districts perceived that the principals had low or inappropriate expectations for these students. One teacher thought the principal viewed her classroom as a baby sitting service. Another teacher felt the principal perceived the program as providing "a little extra help" for children who were "behind in their learning," yet the classroom primarily served children with severe disabilities. One principal could not understand why the children "were not learning to read and write," when, according to the teacher, these children were just learning how to say their name, to identify pictures, and to acquire independent self-care skills.

Expectations for student achievement and teacher performance at the district and community levels differed among the lower

social class communities and between the urban/suburban and rural/small-town communities. In terms of community social class, even though the principals were uninvolved in ECE in each district, in the suburban, affluent district (Lakeview), expectations for student achievement and teacher performance at the district level were consistent with the research of Hallinger and Murphy (1986) on expectations in schools. Their description of expectations within a high SES setting accurately described the situation in Lakeview:

> [High SES schools] existed in an environment of very high expectations and actively sought to incorporate those expectations into policies and practices that promoted student achievement. Parents, staff, and students all believed that students would succeed. Success bred success. . . . Staff members were constantly aware of parental pressures for children to succeed. The high visibility of parents in and around the school represented a form of environmental control over internal processes" (1986, p. 350).

In Lakeview, expectations for student achievement and academic press toward effective instruction emanated from a number of sources in the school, district, and community other than from the principal. In contrast, the low SES rural, small town, and urban communities reflected Hallinger and Murphy's findings in that "the social context provide[d] little normative pressure on

staff. . . to act in ways that promote[d] student achievement" (p. 349).

Differences also existed between the urban/suburban and rural/small-town communities. For example, although the teachers in the urban, low social class district of Dover did not perceive a push for academic achievement from the community, higher expectations for student performance did emanate from the district level special education personnel. In the other lower social class rural and small-town communities, in contrast to the urban/suburban communities, teachers did not perceive that there were high expectations for academic achievement of students from either the district or the community. Further, among these lower social class rural and small-town communities, community expectations for student achievement varied according to the degree of poverty and the relative population sparsity of the communities. That is, the lower the social class and the more rural the community, the less press teachers felt for achievement.

Previous research has suggested that principals need to buffer their staff from negative community expectations in low SES communities (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). Hallinger and Murphy contended that the principals in effective schools located in low SES communities maintained an "island of excellence" and attempted to buffer the staff and students from the lower expectations for achievement held by the community. Hallinger

and Murphy also suggested that "a logical inference from [our] study and other research on social context is that schools should focus some effort on changing the expectations of parents in low-SES communities to reflect a more academic orientation" (1986, p. 352).

With regard to why expectations for achievement differed among the communities the results of this secondary analysis do not support the findings of Hallinger and Murphy (1986). The data from Capper (1992) suggest that the parents of the target students within the low SES rural, small-town, and urban communities had high expectations for student achievement, but these parents did not have the educational confidence, time, or energy to question instructional practices. Parents tended to blame themselves or their children for their child's learning difficulties. In contrast, the Lakeview parents held the school more accountable for student success and actively questioned the instructional process. They were also more visible in the district's schools.

One proposition that may account for these discrepant findings between this study and the study by Hallinger and Murphy (1986), is that they did not collect any data directly from parents in low SES communities. Rather, they based their claims and their subsequent suggestions for practice on data from secondary sources such as teachers' perceptions. Perhaps, teachers' perceptions of low parental expectations reflect a

socioeconomic class bias, resulting in an inaccurate view of parental values.

An alternative explanation for the inconsistent findings is that researchers sometimes do not investigate possible differences between the school "community" and "families" of students in the community. The most recent demographic evidence suggests that the majority of community members in a school district are not parents of students in school (Levin, 1989). Hallinger and Murphy's (1986) findings, as supported by this analysis, may reflect community values but may not be indicative of the expectations of students' families.

Oakes (1989) acknowledged the importance of press for achievement as a social context indicator that shapes effective teaching, and that academic expectations for students constitutes one aspect of this press for achievement. She also acknowledged the importance of parental involvement as a component of school policy and structure which influences effective teaching. Research is needed to determine more specifically the expectations for both student and teacher performance held by the general community, parents, school administrators, and teachers, and to explore the limitations of taking a "drawbridge" approach with the community. Research also needs to determine if expectations for student achievement varies not only on the basis of race and socioeconomic class (Oakes, 1989) but also in terms of grade level and student label (e.g., "at-risk," "mildly

handicapped"). Such data need to be collected from the primary source of those expectations in a variety of communities.

Goal Consensus

Differences in goal consensus existed among all of the communities. Thus, even if school principals had been more closely associated with the ECE programs and had held expectations for student achievement congruent with the students' special learning needs, community characteristics could have confounded the task of achieving consensus on academic achievement goals.

For example, in the low socioeconomic class communities, poverty and its consummate effects on the community and school district, and the resulting complexity of social and academic needs of the students, resulted in multiple school and classroom goals with no clear consensus on priorities. The teachers were required not only to develop instruction for students to attain individual education goals, but also had to be sure the children's faces and hands were washed after arriving at school, that they had appropriate clothing to wear, and that health needs were addressed (such as finding glasses for a student and checking for signs of child abuse).

Further, the teachers and administrators chose to deal with the cultural needs of their students either by seeing these needs as a separate entity from academic ones, or by ignoring them entirely. Rather than viewing the integration of cultural

relevancy with academic skills as vital for academic and social success, the administrators and teachers viewed them as two separate entities, which further fragmented school goals directed solely towards academic achievement. For example, the administrators and teachers in the rural and small-town communities of Prairieville, Green Hills and Deerfield acknowledged the press of culture in their districts and attempted to meet goals of academic achievement and to provide for the cultural needs of their students, but, not in integrated ways. For example, Deerfield employed Native American language teachers to teach the native language to the elementary children. Special Native American holidays were also recognized in addition to the traditional school holidays when children were dismissed from classes. These cultural activities, however, were not integrated into the curriculum.

The urban, low income, culturally diverse community of Dover provided an example of ignoring cultural needs of students, which resulted in goal consensus, but with questionable goals. For example, the Dover superintendent's primary commitment was to school improvement based on the effective schools model. Despite the much publicized racial tension in the district and community, school was held without ceremony on Martin Luther King Day. At the classroom level, instances of ignoring cultural needs included the use of inappropriate curriculum materials for students. For example, the target student who was African-

American and from a single parent family was asked to name pictures in a speech therapy session, which depicted white, middle class, two-parent families engaged in social activities unfamiliar to this child. The Dover classroom decor also showed no signs of cultural relevance for its minority class members. In sum, even though the Dover teachers and administrators may have agreed on academic goals, in communities with distinct cultural and social class characteristics, goal consensus in and of itself was not enough.

The suburban affluent district, however, assumed that because of its homogenous population, the inclusion of cultural diversity in the curriculum was unnecessary. Further, the school and ECE classroom teacher did not have to attend to basic health care needs, thus the teachers could pursue a curriculum which fostered inter- and independence, and which mirrored goal consensus without having to consider social or cultural needs. Again, ignoring diversity, even in homogeneous, white communities, draws into question goal consensus, in that the goals may be too narrow or may be inappropriate.

The lack of goal consensus related to socioeconomic class and culture in these communities is consistent with the findings of other research on goal consensus. For example, Rosenholtz argues that "desegregated elementary schools. . . have more diversified objectives. . ." (1985, p. 381). She further suggests that "goals of competing importance decrease the

likelihood that consensus about their priority will develop. Principal and teacher behavior then become less unitary in purpose" (p. 381).

Goal displacement can also mitigate against goal consensus. Rosenholtz (1985) reports that in less effective schools, the goal of "maintaining order" displaces goals of academic achievement. Goal displacement occurred in the low SES communities when the goal of compliance to state policy displaced the goal of academic achievement for students. The reasons for goal displacement in these communities, which did not occur in the high SES community may have been due to several of the community and district factors which contributed to differences in expectations. That is, fewer staff and resources to implement the early childhood policy, the competing needs of the students and the community, and less press for student achievement as compared to the affluent district, all could contribute to this goal displacement in which administrators' time was consumed by the proliferation of compliance reports and paper work associated with state policy.

Principal Action: Recruitment and Retention

Differences in problems of recruitment and retention of personnel existed among the communities. Prairieville, Deerfield, and Lakeview had no problems with teacher recruitment and retention. In comparison, Green Hills and Dover had higher rates of teacher turnover.

Among several others, Rosenholtz (1985) has argued that the socioeconomic class of a school district can affect a district's ability to attract and recruit the most qualified personnel and to provide relevant staff development opportunities. The rural and small town communities in this study struggled with educational recruitment and retention. Special education teachers and related personnel are in short supply in all communities, but especially in rural and small town areas (Capper, 1990). In contrast, administrators in larger, urban communities are able to recruit personnel who share their philosophy and their goals for education and, in turn, are able to retain those who will assist them in meeting their objectives (Rosenholtz, 1985). Administrators in smaller, urban, minority communities, and those in rural and small town areas and culturally diverse settings do not share in these same advantages. Supported by the research on rural special education (Helge, 1984), the ruralness of the districts in Prairieville, Green Hills, and Deerfield could compound the effects of socioeconomic class because it may be even more difficult to recruit competent staff to communities that offer fewer social inducements and to schools that provide more cultural challenges with less educational prestige (see Metz, 1989).

In all the communities, the findings on recruitment and retention were inconsistent. The data, however, could be interpreted as predictable, based on community stability and the

history of personnel in the communities. The recruitment/retention of teachers and administrators was difficult in Dover, owing possibly to its location in a challenging, urban, minority community. In contrast, both community and organizational inducements were favorable in Lakeview, and recruitment and retention was not a problem. The ECE teachers in Prairieville and Deerfield defied the expected rural attrition rates. Although these teachers were not originally from these communities, they each had married a community member--which could reduce the possibilities of turnover. The Green Hills teacher was in her first year of teaching and had been recruited from another part of the state. She was unsure how long she would continue to teach in that community.

Rosenholtz (1985) and Oakes (1989) limited their discussion of teaching inducements and professional teaching conditions which contribute to retention to those originating within the organization (e.g., teacher salaries, planning time, and clerical support [Oakes]). More research needs to be conducted on the role of community inducements in recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators. For example, the extreme cultural differences of a setting may occasionally facilitate the recruitment of personnel, because of the "glamour" associated with working in a culturally diverse or "Peace Corps" type setting. This "glamour" was why the Deerfield teacher initially

accepted her position and in terms of cultural comparisons, Deerfield may have had a slight advantage over Green Hills and Prairieville in this regard. Prairieville, however, may have had an easier time recruiting personnel because of its higher teacher pay and because amenities were more likely to be available in a small town than in less populated rural areas.

A limited pool of persons seeking educational employment decreases the possibility of hiring someone with knowledge and skills in state-of-the-art pedagogy. Rosenholtz (1985) highlighted the consequences of employing a teacher who is less competent in an effective school by noting this could occur through teacher transfer or through the teacher withholding service. Rosenholtz focused on teacher turnover rather than on the withholding of service, and did not differentiate between these outcomes in different communities. In rural and small town communities such as Green Hills or Deerfield, withholding of service may be a more frequent outcome than teacher turnover. This outcome could be a result of teachers and administrators having significantly fewer options for transfer and dismissal than are available in urban communities.

This secondary analysis suggests that a contribution/inducement ratio may also be a significant factor affecting highly competent teachers in less effective schools (Rosenholtz, 1985; Stringfield & Teddlie, 1990). For example, the teacher in Deerfield initially had approached her work with

great energy and enthusiasm, and had high expectations for her students' achievement. Her contribution to teaching exceeded the school norm and her teaching approach was an anomaly in the "laid back" culture of the school. Neither the organizational nor the community inducements matched her contributions. After five years without community or administrative support, her enthusiasm waned. She coped by "withholding service", as described by Rosenholtz (1985), which resulted in little instructional time for her students. More research should focus on exemplary teachers and administrators who work in schools located in districts and communities that may offer fewer inducements for quality performance.

In addition, more research is needed on teacher succession in a variety of communities and with children of varying ages and abilities. Teacher succession in ECE programs may have a greater effect than turnover in other grades and ability levels because children in ECE usually attend the same classroom program over a period of at least two to three years. During this time the teachers have an opportunity to build rapport with the community, parents, and the children.

Principal Action: Supervision and Assistance

Supervisory practices were similar in each of the districts regardless of socioeconomic class, rural to urban location, or community culture. These practices were similar primarily because the principals were not involved in ECE and monitoring

teacher activity was virtually non-existent. The director of special education in each the districts was primarily responsible for the supervision and evaluation of ECE teachers, but other administrative responsibilities often precluded them from engaging in systematic supervising and monitoring of these teachers.

Concerning principal assistance, Rosenholtz (1985) found that effective schools exemplified norms and opportunities for continuous improvement for teachers. Oakes (1989) also highlighted the importance of access to knowledge for teachers, particularly via staff development. Staff development visibly demonstrates the ways in which administrators support teacher activities. In the communities examined in this analysis, staff development practices did not differ in terms of community culture, but were most distinct between the high and the low SES communities, and between the rural/small town and urban/suburban communities.

In all of the economically disadvantaged communities, teacher input was not considered in staff development planning and the teachers cited many examples of staff training which was inappropriate both in terms of quality and quantity. For example, one teacher noted:

> . . . they [administrators] will provide one or two [inservices]. . . you know, things that they consider special ed that really has nothing to do with us. You know, it's like 'Teaching Reading to Special Populations' and that sort of thing, and I think, well, gee, that was really on my agenda to do for the day. You know [laughs], let's teach them how to read. I can hold up pictures of food and they can't name them. I'm sure they're ready to read the word.

Lakeview, in contrast, provided many more staff development opportunities that were based on teacher input and geared specifically to the needs of the ECE teachers.

The rural and small-town communities did not have convenient access to a major university, or to a metropolitan school district with varied staff development opportunities, when compared to the suburban/urban districts. These rural/small-town communities were also much less able to support attendance at conferences. With fewer qualified personnel living in the small communities, obtaining qualified substitutes in order to provide staff release time during the day was much more difficult. As mentioned previously, staff development is a quality issue, and program quality competed with policy compliance in these communities.

Fewer qualified personnel in economically disadvantaged rural and small-town communities would suggest a greater need for staff supervision and development (see also Stringfield &

Teddlie, 1990). These personnel issues also suggest that preparation programs for school administrators should include instructional leadership training related not only to preschool students, but also to supervision and staff development in communities with varying demographics (Capper, 1992).

Collaboration

Some differences in collaboration existed between the high and low SES communities. The most distinct differences in collaboration, however, occurred between the urban/suburban and rural/small-town communities. The four Lakeview ECE teachers collaborated with each other, with related service personnel, and with general education teachers. The teachers all were located in one school and in adjacent classrooms. The related services personnel regularly worked in the classroom with the students (as opposed to pull-out therapy) and techniques for instruction and therapy were shared between the staff. In Dover, the program support teacher planned regular staff meetings with the ECE teachers to share ideas and to cooperatively plan programs. Although less so than in Lakeview the three ECE teachers, located in the same building, sometimes planned joint activities for their students. Students were usually pulled-out of the classroom for therapy, although therapists occasionally conducted group therapy in the classroom. In contrast, the Prairieville, Green Hills, and Deerfield teachers were the only ECE teachers in their school, and never met with other ECE teachers in their

district or region. Related services personnel provided therapies primarily outside of the classroom.

Several factors could contribute to the rural/small town and suburban/urban differences in teacher collaboration. First, rural and small town communities typically serve fewer students with disabilities, especially those with severe disabilities. Thus fewer staff are needed for this lower incidence population which, in turn, decreases the possibility of staff with similar teaching responsibilities working in the same vicinity. A second factor could be the geographic distance between professionals which exacerbates the difficulty of interacting with colleagues. Third, rural to urban differences could also be due to the fact that teacher collaboration is determined, at least in part, by pedagogical decisions (Oakes, 1989; Rosenholtz, 1985). In turn, pedagogical decisions are shaped, in part, by teacher recruitment and staff development (Oakes, 1989; Stringfield & Teddlie, 1990). For example, engaging students in functional, age-appropriate activities in natural environments with a variety of teaching personnel who support and encourage, in similar ways, student behavior and learning, facilitates generalization of skills (Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989). This lack of expertise in the latest pedagogy for children with special needs, which encourages personnel collaboration, hindered staff interaction in all the rural and small town communities.

In terms of socioeconomic class differences, the central location of the Lakeview ECE classrooms in a Lakeview elementary school in proximity to other classrooms provided the most opportunity for interaction as compared to the low SES communities. One obvious reason for the community socioeconomic class differences is that the high SES district provided more educational facilities for all of its students, and could afford the cost and space of housing their ECE program in an elementary school, whereas the lower SES districts housed their programs in whatever space was available, which sometimes meant totally separate from other educational facilities.

Rosenholtz (1985) also found that teachers in ineffective schools worked in isolation and relied on trial-and-error learning. The lack of collaboration and accompanying work isolation led to relations with students that were more custodial than humanistic. Similarly, the teacher/student relations in this study differed among the settings, on a continuum from Lakeview to Deerfield, which reflected the degree of teacher and student isolation from other school personnel. Rather than custodial and humanistic, the teacher/student relationship in this study could be characterized as one of "babysitting" as compared to "teaching."

For example, the focal student in Lakeview was actively engaged in learning tasks related to his IEP nearly every minute of his day. The teachers in Dover and Prairieville provided a

less rigid schedule but each child was treated like a student. That is, the student was expected to sit in his chair with the other students, responded to questions, listened, and participated in activities. At the opposite end of the continuum, the teachers and aides in Green Hills and Deerfield often held the targeted students in their laps. The students were not expected to sit with their classmates, nor were they required to participate in or to complete activities. This example, combined with the previous discussion, illustrates how community differences shape the effective school linkages of expectations, goal consensus, recruitment and retention, supervision, staff development, and collaboration with student learning.

CONCLUSION

These findings and related discussion explained how effective school linkages for young children with disabilities differed among five communities and explored explanations for these differences related to community socioeconomic class, culture, and rural, small-town, suburban or urban location. The findings and discussion suggested that some effective school linkages were similar and others were distinctly different in low and high SES and between urban/suburban and rural/small-town communities. While some differences were clearly dichotomous, others presented themselves along a continuum from affluent, to urban poverty, to small town, to rural, and to Native American

communities. The continuum of differences in these communities also reflected a continuum of increasing community complexity related to socioeconomic class, rural isolation, and culture in the community.

These findings were interpreted by suggesting that the low SES fond in some communities raised barriers to principal actions typically found in effective schools, and that a rural and small town community further impeded effective strategies. In the low SES communities of Dover, Prairieville, Green Hills, and Deerfield, principals were minimally involved and held low or ambiguous expectations for student achievement. The complexity of community socioeconomic class and culture resulted in multiple school goals, difficulty in staff recruitment and supervision, and lack of teacher collaboration on curriculum decisions. The outcomes for children in the classroom, as reported in Capper (1992), were loose, sometimes non-existent linkages between teacher directed actions and the achievement of student goals, and a less than meaningful educational experience for the child.

In contrast, at Lakeview, even without principal leadership, high expectations for student achievement emanated from the superintendent, other school personnel and the community. Absent the press of great cultural or socioeconomic needs, along with a steady supply of qualified personnel and resources for staff development, the principal actions of recruitment, and opportunities for teacher collaboration on state-of-the-art

pedagogical decisions, shaped the degree of group cohesiveness and teacher collaboration on decision-making, problem solving, and experimentation. From this interaction, which encouraged refinement of teaching skills and the further socialization of high expectations, emerged a tight linkage between teacher directed actions and the achievement of student goals.

This secondary analysis is not without its limitations, given the complexity of sorting out influencing factors in a variety of communities. The demographic complexities that exist in all communities, however, necessitates that policies, theoretical frameworks, and associated research should not be decontextualized from exogenous and endogenous factors related to student learning.

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Table 1

Selected Site Characteristics

	LAKEVIEW (SUBURBAN AFFLUENT)	DOVER (URBAN POVERTY)	PRAIRIEVILLE (SMALL TOWN)	GREEN HILLS (RURAL POVERTY)	DEERFIELD (NATIVE AMERICAN)
COMMUNITY					
POPULATION	41,298	46,354	5829	566	1,969
% UNEMPLOYMENT	2.7	8.6	6.8	4	12.4
% IN POVERTY	3.9	9.7	6.6	17.2	17.9
% MINORITY	1.6	11.5	.66	0	90.4
MEDIAN EDUC. LEVEL (YEARS)	15.6	12.4	NA	12.4	11.2
AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME	$55,510	$28,873	$16,540	$22,785	$22,837
DISTRICT					
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	6,164	6,820	1,244	812	1,016
% ON FREE/REDUCED LUNCHES	2.6	52.0	16.2	16.7	98.1
% MINORITY	5.2	30.0	.88	0	100.0
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM					
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	560	1,151	150	72	240
% ON FREE/REDUCED LUNCHES	4.1	NA	NA	9.7	92.5
% MINORITY	5.0	36.0	.67	0	100.0
EARLY CHILDHOOD/SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM					
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	30	108	17	14	16
% OF TOTAL SPEC. ED POPULATION	5.4	9.4	11.3	19.4	6.7
% OF FAMILIES ON AFDC	3.3	54.6	58.8	33.3	43.8
% OF SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES	3.3	50.0	35.3	20.0	6.3
% OF STUDENTS FROM FAMILIES WITH BOTH PARENTS UNEMPLOYED	0	4.6	41.2	20.0	31.3
% MINORITY STUDENTS	3.3	36.1	0	0	100.0
EARLY CHILDHOOD/SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT					
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	30	108	17	14	16
% OF SPEECH/LANGUAGE	0	3.7	58.8	93.3	81.3
% OF LEARNING DISABLED	73.3	66.7	0	0	6.3
% EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED	16.7	3.7	23.5	0	0
% MENTAL RETARDATION	6.7	21.3	11.8	6.7	12.5
% PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED	3.3	2.8	5.9	0	0
% VISUALLY IMPAIRED	0	.9	0	0	0
% HEARING IMPAIRED	0	.9	0	0	0

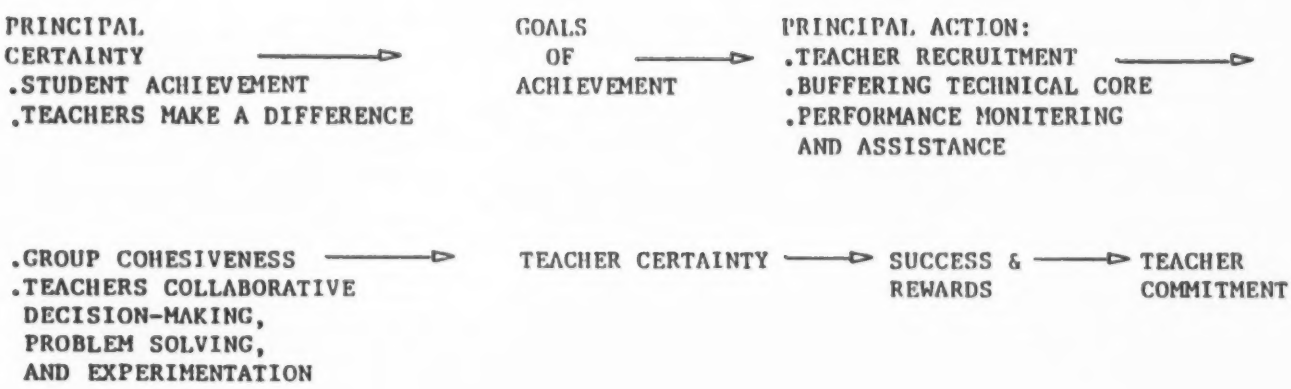
Table 2

Student Characteristics

	Lakeview	Dover	Prairieville	Green Hills	Deerfield
Race	White	Black	White	White	Native American
Sex	M	M	M	M	M
Disability Characteristics	Down Syndrome	Mentally Handicapped Austistic	Mentally Handicapped	Mentally Handicapped Challenging Behaviors	Down Syndrome
Toilet Trained?	No	No	Yes	No	No
Ambulatory?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Verbal?	No	No	No	No	No

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Model of school success.



ROSENHOLTZ (1985)